



April 1983

## SOVIET ACTIVE MEASURES: FOCUS ON FORGERIES

For many years forgeries have been a staple of Soviet "active measures." In the post-World War II period, the Soviets and their allies, especially Czechoslovakia and East Germany, have repeatedly distributed false documents to mislead target audiences. In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1961, U.S. officials identified 31 documents as communist forgeries.<sup>1</sup> A former Czech intelligence officer, Ladislav Bittman, who defected in 1968, has described how forged documents are prepared and disseminated.<sup>2</sup> In 1980, the House Select Committee on Intelligence publicized a number of forgeries which circulated in the 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Congressional hearings in 1982 placed additional cases of political forgeries on the record.<sup>4</sup> This study examines communist techniques for producing forgeries and a number of fabrications which have come to light in 1982.

### Operational Control

Proposals for forgeries and other active measures may originate either in KGB headquarters or in the KGB residency in the target country. Whatever the source, the local residency and Moscow collaborate closely. Depending on its sensitivity and importance, approval for a forgery may be obtained from the KGB leadership, the International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, or the Secretariat of the Central Committee itself. KGB specialists prepare the forgery under the supervision of the active measures section of the KGB's First Chief Directorate. Although any KGB agent or asset may be used to surface the document, the chief of the KGB residency's active measures group controls the operation.

Many forgeries aim at the media. Although the fabricators are aware that once a document appears in print the supposed author will promptly deny its authenticity, the Soviets calculate that a denial will never entirely offset the damage from news stories based on the forgery.

<sup>1</sup> *Communist Forgeries*, Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Government Printing Office, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The Deception Game*, Ballantine, 1972.

<sup>3</sup> *Soviet Covert Action: The Forgery Offensive*, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Government Printing Office, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> *Soviet Active Measures*, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Government Printing Office, 1982.

Some forgeries are not designed for public dissemination but rather are intended to circulate privately. Their purpose is to influence individual leaders and opinionmakers. The damage is harder to assess. The purported author often gets no opportunity to set the record straight.

Some forgeries have general themes and are recirculated repeatedly. Two examples, still in use in 1983, are the so-called "holocaust" documents (Fig. 1) and the false "destabilization" U.S. Army Field Manual, FM 30-31B (Fig. 2). The first, a doctored U.S. military planning document, shows supposed U.S. nuclear targets in Western Europe. First surfacing in the Norwegian magazine *Orientering* in 1967, it was denounced then but has resurfaced more than 20 times since in various countries. Most recently, it was the basis for questions in the City Council of Graz, Austria, in December 1982.

The subject of the fake Army manual is "destabilization techniques" in noncommunist countries. Its purpose is to stimulate suspicion about U.S. intentions and activities. The first mention of it was in March 1975 in the Turkish newspaper *Baris*. Later that year an attempt to circulate it within the Philippine Government led to its exposure. It has appeared a number of times since, most recently in a January 1982 article in the government-affiliated Maltese newspaper *Il Torca*.

### Technical Aspects

The Soviets have developed considerable technical proficiency in fabricating U.S. Government documents, but quality varies greatly depending on the time devoted to preparation and the nature of the intended audience. Even the best forgeries can be unmasked by expert analysis. Indicators that a document may be forged relate to:

**Surfacing.** The forger confronts the problem of reaching the intended audience without revealing the origin of the document. Mailing the fabrication without a return address or with a spurious one is the most common method.

**Cover Letters.** Frequently, the document is transmitted with a covering letter which attempts to lend authenticity to the forgery. Typically, the cover letter summarizes the content of the forgery and explains the author's alleged motive for transmitting it in terms of outrage over the revelations contained in the fabrication. The letter is always untraceable and frequently unsigned—with the writer excusing the lack of a signature by claiming fear for his life or position. An example is the unsigned cover letter used in an attempt to surface FM 30-31B as shown in Fig. 2.

**Format.** The Soviets go to considerable effort to collect useful forms, letters, official signatures, and the like as models for their efforts. (Fig. 7 reproduces a forged Department of Defense press release.) While the Soviets produce authentic-looking documents in many cases, there are almost always small discrepancies and mistakes. Government forms and procedures frequently change; for them to be duplicated with total accuracy, a detailed knowledge—difficult for an outsider to achieve—is required.

**Language.** The texts of some forged U.S. documents indicate that they are not prepared by native-born speakers of American English. Phraseology is stilted; British spellings may occur in purported American documents (British forms are widely taught in Soviet schools); and some expressions appear to be literally translated from the Russian. For example, the forged military memo on NATO air defense exercises (Fig. 8) uses the British spelling "manoeuvre" instead of the American "maneuver"; the Aviation Personnel International letter (Fig. 9) refers to "competent bodies" in a direct translation of the Russian expression *kompetentnyye organy*, a euphemism for security services but not used in this sense in American English. While these linguistic flaws may not be evident to the target audience, especially in non-English-speaking areas, they are important clues in establishing lack of authenticity.

**News Value.** In many cases the forger tries to influence public opinion by achieving uncritical publication of the product. To do this, the media must be convinced not only of the document's authenticity but also of its news value. To heighten interest, many forgeries bear an inflated security classification or purport to be the correspondence of high-ranking officials.

**Timing.** Political forgeries, whether targeted at public opinion or select decisionmaking groups, are often tied to current issues. The false Department of Commerce memorandum (Fig. 5) dealing with trade issues, for example, circulated just before the Versailles economic summit meeting of June 1982. The sudden appearance of a "private" or "confidential" document at a time of political sensitivity can be a warning of possible fraud.

**Photo Copies.** Forgeries are distributed in the form of photo copies. This facilitates "cutting and pasting" so that signatures and letterheads from authentic documents can be combined with a fabricated text. The letter supposedly sent from Aviation Personnel International to the South African Air Force (Fig. 6) was prepared this way; the model was a circular business letter from the company offering its placement services to prospective customers.

**Content.** Soviet forgeries tend to avoid specific allegations that can be disproved. (Oral disinformation is a more likely vehicle for falsehoods of this sort.) They highlight statements that exacerbate U.S. relations with a target country and reinforce existing tensions or anti-U.S. sentiments. An example is the Aviation Personnel International letter implying U.S. collusion in South African plots against black African countries (Fig. 6). In the false Department of Defense press release on the Falklands, Secretary of Defense Weinberger allegedly refers to "Argentina's stubborn and selfish attitude" in the conflict (Fig. 7).

### Impact

The effectiveness of a political forgery often depends as much on the recipient's mental predisposition as on the skills of the forger. Without an inclination to accept as authentic documents which reinforce existing beliefs and opinions, most forgeries would have little impact. The typical telltale patterns—anonymous surfacing, technical and linguistic aberrations, news value and timeliness, and contribution to Soviet policy and propaganda goals—would suggest to impartial readers the need for careful investigation. Behind the repeated acceptance of forgeries that already have been exposed, such as the holocaust papers or the fake field manual, lie the prejudices of the deceived.

Many forgeries aimed at the media never achieve uncritical publication or do so only in openly procommunist vehicles. But the risk is low. A forgery can be denounced, but once published it assumes a credibility of its own and can create the impression that "where there is smoke, there is fire." An illustration of the long-term, subliminal effect of calculated fabrications turned up in Finland's largest circulation daily, *Helsingin Sanomat*, in September 1982. A letter to the editor, signed by three doctors with no known communist connections, indicated an acceptance of the holocaust documents as authentic, despite their repeated exposure.

### ANNEXES: Recent Forgeries

- Figure 1: Holocaust Papers
- Figure 2: Destabilization Field Manual
- Figure 3: Greek Coup: Clark-Stearns Letter
- Figure 4: NATO Nuclear Deployments: Haig-Luns Letter
- Figure 5: Gas Pipeline Memo
- Figure 6: South Africa: Aviation Personnel International Letter
- Figure 7: The Falklands: Department of Defense Press Release
- Figure 8: Mediterranean Air Safety: U.S. Military Memo on NATO Exercises
- Figure 9: F-5 Offer to South Africa: Northrop Sales Letter
- Figure 10: Downstream Operations



FIGURE 3

**Greek Coup: Clark-Stearns Letter**

**Description:** The forgery purports to be a letter from William Clark, then Deputy Secretary of State, to the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, Monteaule Stearns, and an accompanying one-page intelligence study.

**Purpose:** This forgery is intended to harm U.S. relations with the Greek Government of Andreas Papandreu. It is dated shortly before his election and alludes to a possible military coup in the event of a Papandreu victory.

**Surfacing:** In January 1982, several months after the elections, unsuccessful attempts were made to have the letter published in Athens. A few weeks later, after copies were circulated at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Madrid, the Athens daily *Vrathini* published a story casting doubt on the letter's authenticity and described it as probably the work of a "third-country intelligence service." Copies of the forgery were mailed to Athens newspapers in plain envelopes without return address.

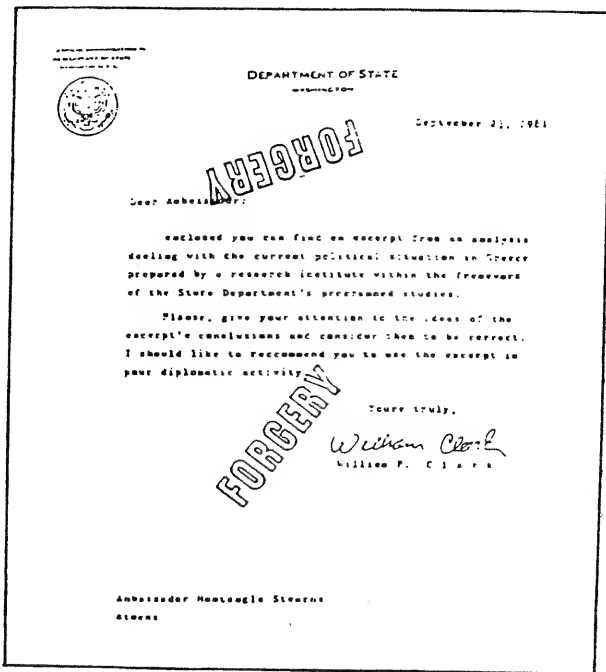


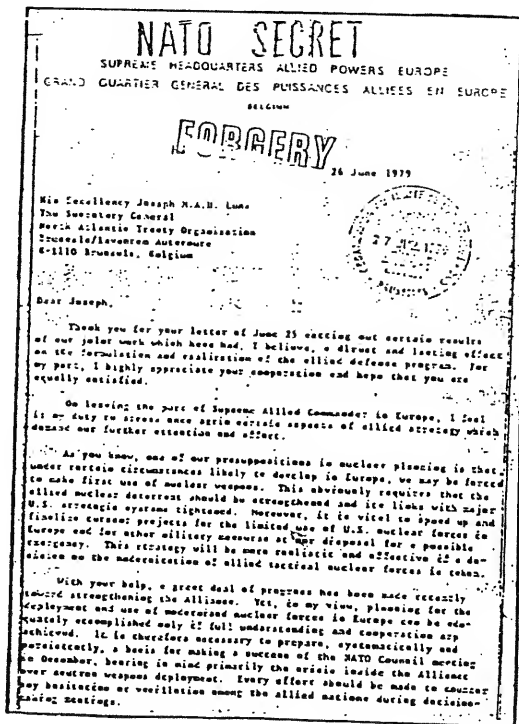
FIGURE 4

**NATO Nuclear Deployments: Haig-Luns Letter**

**Description:** This letter, dated just before Gen. Haig left his position as NATO commander in 1979, concerns nuclear policy. It discusses a possible nuclear first strike and calls for "action of a sensitive nature" to "jolt the faint hearted" in Europe. Technically, the quality is professional, but it includes mistakes—such as "Dear Joseph" instead of the "Dear Joe" used habitually by Gen. Haig.

**Purpose:** The letter is intended to stimulate the nuclear disarmament campaign by suggesting a Haig-Luns collusion against opponents to the modernization of nuclear forces in Europe.

**Surfacing:** The forgery was first published in the April 22, 1982, edition of the Belgium leftist weekly *De Nieuwe*. It was also reported on Belgian television and radio. In May the forgery was reprinted in the newspaper of the Communist Party of Luxembourg, despite its having been branded a forgery. Its appearance coincided with numerous antinuclear demonstrations in the spring of 1982.




**FIGURE 5**  
**Gas Pipeline Memo**

**Description:** This forgery purports to be a Department of Commerce memorandum dated February 18, 1982, which records the recommendations of an alleged "Special Presidential Working Group on Strategic Economic Policy." It discusses the effects of abrogating the gas pipeline arrangement between the U.S.S.R. and some West European countries. While the technical quality is high, it contains some lapses, including the misspelling of the name of the Secretary of Commerce in a memo supposedly signed by the Secretary and intended for the President's attention.

**Purpose:** The forgery distorts U.S. economic policy and is intended to add to frictions between the United States and its West European allies over the gas pipeline issue.

**Surfacing:** The document was mailed in plain envelopes to newsmen and officials of the European Economic Community in late May 1982 just before the Versailles economic summit.



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20540

SECRET

Name: SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL WORKING GROUP  
ON STRATEGIC ECONOMIC POLICY

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Date: February 18, 1982

Recommendations of the Special Presidential Working Group on Strategic Economic Policy. Number [redacted] follows:

<u>Department of Commerce</u>	Malcolm Baldrige, Secretary of Commerce Lionel N. Oliver, Under Secretary for International Trade Robert G. Dederick, Assistant Secretary Raymond J. Malcom, Assistant Secretary Thomas Collamore, Confidential Assistant to the Secretary Eugene K. Lawson, Deputy Assistant Secretary
<u>Central Intelligence Agency</u>	Paulrice Ernst, Director, Office of Economic Research Martin Kohn, Deputy Director, Office of Economic Research
<u>Department of State</u>	Ernest B. Johnston, Deputy Assistant Secretary Nicholas Sr. Platt, Deputy Assistant Secretary Gordon L. Stresb, Deputy Assistant Secretary William B. Milan, Director, Department of International Finance and Development
<u>Department of Treasury</u>	Mark E. England, Assistant Secretary William C. Seabebe, Director, Office of East-West Economic Policy

In order to carry out the strategic objectives of the [redacted] policy we view as desirable to submit for the approval of the President, the following aspects of our economic policy:


Within the sanctions imposed upon the Soviet Union by the United States and co-sponsorship by our Western European Allies, we propose undertaking actions, whose objective shall be the defatigating severance of the gas pipeline contract between the Soviet Union and some of our Western

**FIGURE 6**  
**South Africa: Aviation Personnel International Letter**

**Description:** This fabricated letter is addressed to Lt. Gen. Muller of the South African Air Force and uses the letterhead of a New Orleans-based company specializing in the placement of aviation personnel. It refers to the recruitment of combat-trained helicopter pilots with U.S. Government encouragement and implies U.S. complicity in the failed coup attempt of November 1981 in the Seychelles Islands. The language is somewhat stilted. Letterhead and signature come from an Aviation Personnel International form letter addressed to prospective jobseekers in which the forged text and address have been substituted. Aviation Personnel International has exposed the forgery in a sworn affidavit before the U.S. District Court of New Orleans.

**Purpose:** The text lends spurious evidence to support a number of Soviet disinformation themes: covert U.S.-South African military arrangements; U.S.-sponsored efforts to overthrow black African governments; and U.S. responsibility for the Seychelles coup attempt of November 1981.

**Surfacing:** The forged letter appeared in several African newspapers in June 1982.



Aviation Personnel International  
P.O. Box 30044 • New Orleans, LA 70130 • (504) 293-3436

April 6, 1982

Lt.-Gen. A. M. Muller  
South African Air Force  
Nedbank Centre, cnr Church and Schubarney  
Priv. Bag 2195  
0001 Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir,

Based on our agreement of December 1981 in which you request a continual supply of incoming pilots who are capable of working inside the SASAF, we now forward the personal data of pilots who - according to our evaluation - meet standards stipulated by you. Said pilots are qualified to operate Type 109-40 combat helicopters and are well-trained in jungle warfare.

We repeatedly wish to direct your attention to the fact that we only recruit and recommend the pilots and the engagement procedures are the responsibility of our representatives. On instructions received (from the competent bodies of the U.S. Government and because of political factors) this go between activity of our organization will be kept secret from your side in full accordance with our guarantees. This is especially justified by circumstances that emerged as a result of the Seychelles action. We advise you to undertake another similar visit that allows for a more careful judgement of given circumstances.

We believe you will understand our motives and can be mutually satisfied with how our business relations are shaping-up. We completely understand your position so we shall continue to seek out comrades-in-arms who are trustworthy in every respect.

Sincerely yours,

*Michelle Lang*  
Michelle Lang  
Assistant Registrar

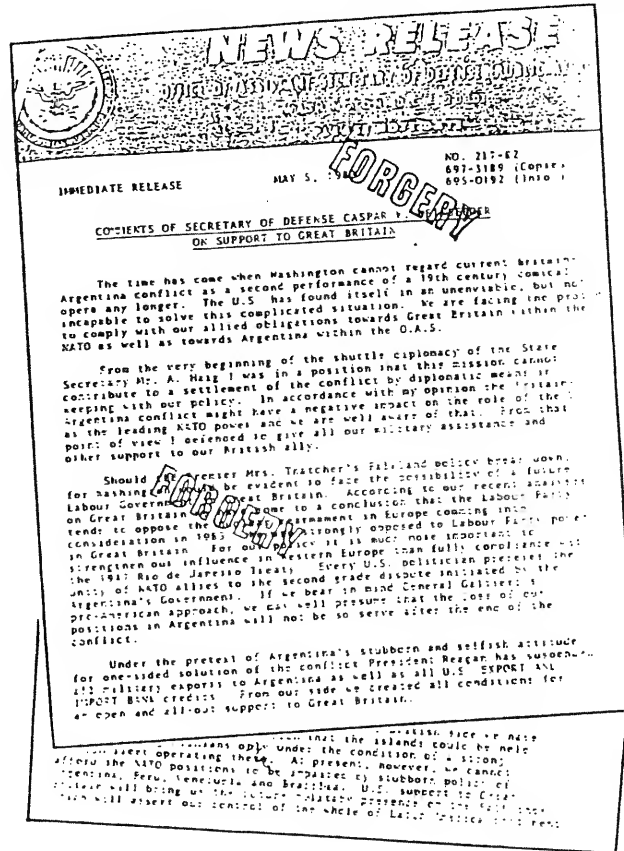
ML/Ld  
Enclosures: 2

**FIGURE 7**  
**The Falklands: Department of Defense Press Release**

**Description:** The purported press release attributes provocative comments to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger regarding the Falklands crisis. It contains a number of awkward phrases and misusages. For example, there is a reference to "the stubborn policy of Argentina, Peru, Venezuela and Brazilia." In Russian, "Brazilia" is the word for "Brazil". The real Department of Defense press release No. 217-82 concerned contract awards by the Defense Communications Agency.

**Purpose:** The undiplomatic nature of these fabricated comments was intended to impair U.S. relations not only with Latin America but also with Great Britain—there is an implication of a U.S. intrusion into British domestic politics. Specific themes parallel those of Soviet propaganda at the time: the press release states, for example, that U.S. support for Great Britain will lead to the establishment of a U.S. military base "from which we will assert our control of the whole of Latin American Continent."

**Surfacing:** This forgery was probably not intended for publication. Copies circulated in Washington, D.C. among diplomats accredited to the Organization of American States. It may have been reported to Latin American capitals through diplomatic channels.



**FIGURE 8**  
**Mediterranean Air Safety: Military Memo on NATO Exercises**

**Description:** This forgery consists of a photo copy of the cover page of a classified military handbook and an unrelated one-page forged document on allied training exercises originating from "Headquarters, Support Operations, Task Force Europe." It implies that NATO exercises have been responsible for civil aviation accidents in Italy in 1980 and 1982. The forgery contains a number of errors. For example, the address is given as "APO 163, U.S. Forces"; all Army Post Offices are designated by a five-number series.

**Purpose:** The Italian leftwing press has been speculating that crashes of civilian aircraft, attributed to pilot error, in fact may have been downed during NATO training exercises. The forgery was intended to supply "evidence" to bolster this disinformation effort.

**Surfacing:** In July the forgery was mailed to several news agencies in Italy. The envelopes had no return address. On July 23, a number of Italian newspapers carried an ANSA news agency story identifying the document as fraudulent.

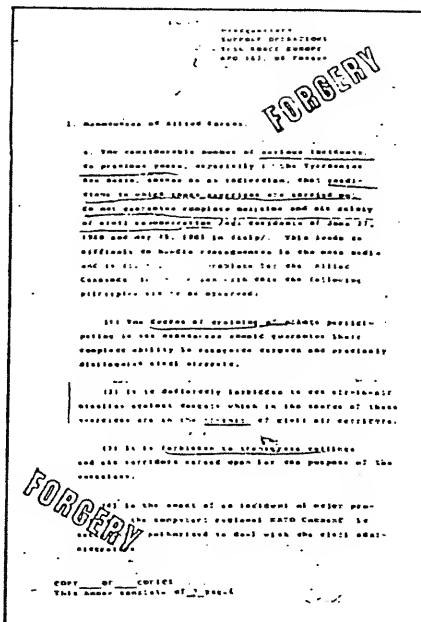


FIGURE 9

F-5 Offer to South Africa: Northrop Sales Letter

**Description:** In the fall of 1982 the Northrop Corporation sent letters to prospective customers inviting them to observe flight tests of the company's F-5F "Tiger Shark" aircraft. The forgery substituted a false addressee, the commander of the South African Air Force, an alteration easily done with reproduction equipment. The addressee, Lt. Gen. A.M. Muller, is the same as on the Aviation Personnel International forgery.

**Purpose:** The letter is intended to show that Northrop, presumably with the blessing of the U.S. Government, is violating the embargo on arms sales to South Africa.

**Surfacing:** The letter was published as authentic in *Jeune Afrique*, a newsweekly published in Paris in its November 17, 1982 edition. In its January 19, 1983 edition, *Jeune Afrique* published photocopies of the forgery, along with a letter from Northrop denying its authenticity, but the story declined to pass on the question of validity. The forgery also appeared in the *Times of Zambia* on January 10, 1983. In both cases the photo copy of the envelope allegedly mailed from Northrop's headquarters in Hawthorne, California, showed a 20 cent stamp, not the correct international postage.

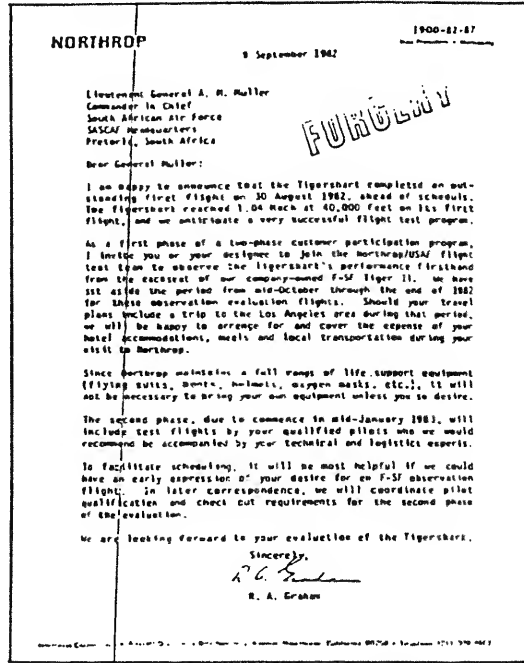


FIGURE 10

Downstream Operations

**Description:** This forgery is a fabricated Department of Defense document dated February 8, 1982, entitled "Related Missions' Directives." The letterhead bears an outsized Defense Department seal and the ZIP code (20402) of the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. It contains many grammatical errors, misspellings, and other telltale indications of its spurious nature.

**Purpose:** It is intended as "evidence" of U.S.-Israeli collaboration in planning the invasion of Lebanon. This assertion coincides with Soviet propaganda charges.

**Surfacing:** It was apparently not intended for publication but circulated in a number of Arab countries and among Arab communities in Europe in the fall of 1982.

